

What is claimed is:

Sub A1
1. A method comprising
making at least one digital facility available from a source to users via an electronic communication medium,

associating with at least one of the users an access permission that enables the user to access at least one of the digital facilities, and

associating with at least one of the users a grant permission that enables the user to give to another user a permission with respect at least one of the digital facilities.

2. The method of claim 1 in which the permission that is granted to another user comprises a perform permission.

3. The method of claim 1 in which the permission that is granted to another user comprises a grant permission.

Sub B1
4. The method of claim 1 in which the digital facility comprises data.

5. The method of claim 1 in which the digital facility comprises a service.

6. The method of claim 1 in which the source comprises a web server.

7. The method of claim 1 in which the users comprise individuals using web browsers.

8. The method of claim 1 in which the users are employees of companies.

9. The method of claim 1 in which the electronic communication medium comprises the Internet.

Sub A2
10. The method of claim 1 in which the user can give the other user both access permission and grant permission.

11. The method of claim 1 in which the digital facility comprises an application program, and the application defines the permissions.

12. The method of claim 1 in which the users comprise individuals who are associated with respective companies, and the permissions comprise company permissions that apply to individuals associated with one of the companies and individual permissions that apply individually to a user.

13. The method of claim 1 in which at least one of the permissions comprises an aggregate of other permissions.

14. The method of claim 13 in which the aggregate permission includes fundamental permissions that have arguments of a common type.

15. The method of claim 13 in which the other user's permission with respect to the digital facility is determined by a combination of individual permissions and company permissions.

16. A medium storing a software program that is capable of configuring a machine to:

make at least one digital facility available from a source to users via an electronic communication medium,

associate with at least one of the users an access permission that enables the user to access at least one of the digital facilities, and

associate with at least one of the users a grant permission that enables the user to give to another user a permission with respect at least one of the digital facilities.

17. Apparatus comprising

means for making at least one digital facility available from a source to users via an electronic communication medium,

means for associating with at least one of the users an access permission that enables the user to access at least one of the digital facilities, and

means for associating with at least one of the users a grant permission that enables the user to give to another user a permission with respect at least one of the digital facilities.

18. Apparatus comprising

a source of digital facilities,

an electronic communication medium coupled between the source and users to make the facility available to the users,

storage containing information identifying an access permission that associates with at least one of the users an access permission that enables the user to access at least one of the digital facilities, and

storage containing information identifying a grant permission that enables the user to give to another user a permission with respect at least one of the digital facilities.

19. A method comprising

making business information of a portal-providing company company available to individuals using a web server and web browsers,

associating with at least one of the individuals an access permission that enables the user to access the business information, and

associating with at least one of the users a grant permission that enables the user to give to another user a permission with respect to the business information.

20. A method comprising

providing a web site,

using the web site, interacting with web browsers of users,

in response to a request from a user to the web site, determining if the user has permission to have the request served,

enabling one of the users to grant to another of the user selectively either only a permission to have a particular type of request served, only a permission to grant other users the ability to grant permissions, or both.

21. A method comprising

maintaining a database of information that associates each user of a digital facility available from a source with permissions that define the rights of the user to access the digital facility or to grant to other users the rights with respect to the digital facility, or both, and

enabling users who have the permission to do so, to alter the permissions associated with the user.

22. The method of claim 21 in which the permission information is stored as user profiles in the database.

23. The method of claim 21 in which the users interact with the database through a web server/web browser pair in altering the permissions.

24. The method of claim 21 in which the permissions comprise cascading permissions.

25. The method of claim 21 in which the users belong to entities and the database also stores information about permissions that define rights of all of the users who belong to a given one of the entities.

26. The method of claim 21 in which the database also stores information about aggregate permissions that comprise predefined sets of individual permissions.

27. A method comprising

making at least one digital facility available from a source to users via an electronic communication medium,

maintaining a database of profiles that define permissions of users and companies to access the digital facility,

authorizing at least one user to create profiles for other users, and

automatically making a user who creates a profile for another user or for a company, a manager of the profile of the other user or the company.